

Pregnant Women and Food Safety

Listeriosis and Pregnancy: What Is Your Risk?

(NAPS)—When eating for two, you need to pay close attention to food safety, as well as nutrition. Food can contain harmful bacteria that can cause serious illness.

One type of bacteria found in the environment, *Listeria monocytogenes*, can cause a foodborne illness called listeriosis. CDC estimates about 2,500 people become ill from listeriosis each year and that 1 in 5 die from the disease. Pregnant women are about 20 times more likely than other healthy adults to become infected.

Here are answers to some questions about listeriosis and pregnancy from USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service:

Q: Why is listeriosis dangerous for me and my child?

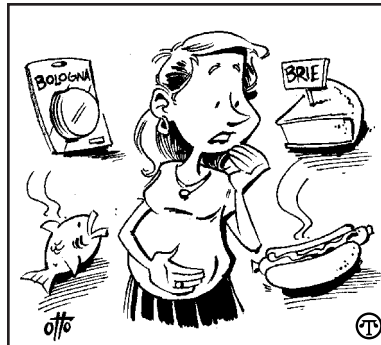
A: Hormonal changes during pregnancy have an effect on the mother's immune system that lead to an increased susceptibility to listeriosis in the mother. It can be transmitted to the fetus through the placenta even if the mother is not showing signs of illness. This can lead to premature delivery, miscarriage, stillbirth, or serious health problems for her newborn.

Q: What are the symptoms?

A: Symptoms can take a few days or even weeks to appear and can be mild, so you may not even know you have it. In pregnant women, listeriosis may cause flu-like symptoms with the sudden onset of fever, chills, muscle aches, and sometimes diarrhea or upset stomach. If the infection spreads to the nervous system, symptoms may include headache, stiff neck, confusion, loss of balance, or convulsions. If you have these symptoms, see your doctor. A blood test can determine if you have listeriosis.

Q: How can I prevent listeriosis?

A: **Do not eat** hot dogs, lunch-



Being aware of food safety can help protect you and your baby from listeriosis.

eon meats, or deli meats **unless they are reheated** until steaming hot. **Do not eat** soft cheeses, such as feta, Brie, Camembert, blue-veined cheese, and Mexican-style cheeses or refrigerated paté and meat spreads. **Do not eat** refrigerated smoked seafood including salmon, trout, whitefish, cod, tuna, and mackerel **unless** it is an ingredient in a **cooked** dish. **Do not drink** raw unpasteurized milk or **eat** foods that contain unpasteurized milk.

Use all perishable items that are precooked and ready-to-eat as soon as possible. Clean your refrigerator regularly and make sure it always stays at 40°F or below. When preparing meals, wash hands and surfaces often; don't allow cross-contamination between raw and cooked foods; cook to proper temperatures; and refrigerate or freeze promptly.

For a copy of the fact sheet "Listeriosis and Pregnancy: What is Your Risk?" e-mail your name and address to fsis.outreach@usda.gov.

For more food safety information, call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-800-535-4555; for the hearing impaired 1-800-256-7072 (TTY); www.fsis.usda.gov.